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ABSTRACT

The reports summarized in this paper deal with different aspects of public education. Charles S. Benson discusses the lack of sufficient financial support for all levels of public education by Federal, State and local governments. Francis S. Chase argues that signs indicating the renewal and reinvigoration of urban education are increasing. Lloyd M. Cooke analyzes the problems which contribute to the underachievement of poor and minority children in urban public schools. Faustine C. Jones examines the historic and current roles of public education and public attitudes education for minorities and the poor. The last paper, by Arthur E. Wise, deals with the loss of public confidence in public education and evaluates the effectiveness of Federal and State policies designed to provide equal educational opportunity and quality education. (Author/EB)

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"RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION: AN AGENDA FOR THE 1980's"

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Summaries of Presentations[1] by:

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Francis S. Chase	Bernard C. Watson
Lloyd M. Cooke	Arthur E. Wise

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INVESTMENT AND DISINVESTMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Charles S. Benson

The general prosperity of the post-World War II era has not been good for America's cities (with a few exceptions). Most central city areas serve the function, inter alia, of a storage bin for people who have no productive role to play in the market economy. Looking around the world, this is more true of our cities and cities in the Third World than of cities in other industrially-advanced states.

Investment means giving up present satisfactions for future; disinvestment, the opposite. For almost any act, there are alternative opportunities, both on the investment and disinvestment side. Presently, we witness a relative withdrawal of public funds from instructional programs in public schools in central cities. This is a natural result of a decade of "school finance reform," under which the target population is not poor and minority children but taxpayers in low-property wealth districts. Many of these districts are in suburbia and are inhabited by the middle class.

Thus, state-local financial policy in education explicitly undermines the expressed interest of the U.S. Congress to afford priority of concern to the disadvantaged, the handicapped, the bilingual, etc., child. Unfortunately, however, our central government, notwithstanding the fact that its tax system is more progressive and more productive than those of state and local authorities, so far has declined to make any major dollar investment in our largest civilian public activity, namely, schools. Hence, there is little effective muscle in t the educational policies of the U.S. Congress.

The creation of knowledge and abilities in students is a joint

activity of student and teacher. Students can invest in education or, by giving main attention to today's pleasure, they can effectively disinvest. The miserable employment situation in central cities cannot but discourage some students from investing in their futures. Accordingly, the intent of the U.S. Congress to serve disadvantaged, etc., youth in shcools is cancelled to some degree by the failure of our national employment policy. For central city youth, jobs policy and educational policy cannot be logically separated.

Likewise, if one of the effects of the tax revolt and of central city financial distress is to cause urban public institutions of higher education to raise fees for tuition, the route to jobs through the process of acquiring advanced certificates is also being closed. For central city youth, public policy in higher education cannot logically be separated from public policy in K-12 education. Federal government's financial stake in higher education has long been much larger, relatively speaking, than in K-12 schooling. There already exists, therefore, a basis for congressional intervention in tuition and financial aid policies of colleges and universities. The policy objective should be to focus that interest on institutions in large metropolitan areas.

In spite of their difficulties and impediments, central city school systems have many high-achieving students, and many of these high-achieving students are from low-income families. Evidence from New York and Oakland will be cited.

An ominous cloud on the horizon is the re-emergence of educational vouchers on the political scene. Vouchers are touted as advantageous to both the middle class and the poor. Vouchers actively

imply a shift of investment from public to private institutions. Given that achievement patterns in cities appear to be strongly bi-modal, the likely effect of vouchers is to pit the interests of parents with high-achieving students against parents of low-achieving students, without regard to income. The final result would be an increase in stratification of students as measured by predicted school progress. This is contrary to the ideal of public, as distinct from private, education.

Finally, four non-exclusive strategies for central city policy are noted:

(1) Isolation: seeking to keep revenues within the city; home production; subsidies for youth employment; requirements that firms in the city hire local people;

(2) Federal City: expansion of federal revenues; pressure to keep federal outlays in categorical forms;

(3) State Reform City: introduction of city problems into the school reform movement, as in the Levittown case; and

(4) Bootstrap City: reliance upon the single and communal efforts of central city families to improve the prospects for themselves and their children.

A NEW ERA OF EXCELLENCE IN URBAN EDUCATION: WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REALIZE IT?

Francis S. Chase

In the early decade of this century, our great cities were pacesetters in elementary and secondary education. Generations of immigrants and children of immigrants developed their talents in the city schools alongside the descendants of earlier settlers. The large cities attracted and developed teachers and administrators of great vision, competence, and energy. National leadership for education was provided by many distinguished urban educators; and many constructive innovations were worked out in large city schools.

The last three decades have produced demographic, technological, and other changes with which schools in our cities and elsewhere have found it difficult to cope. The result has been widely advertised declines in achievement, and increases in disruptive behaviors, crime and other symptoms of educational and social malaise. Financial crises and controversies between teachers' organizations and administrators compounded the problems of educating the large numbers of the poor and members of minority groups who were drawn to the cities from the rural South, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere.

Even in the midst of the harshest criticism and the acknowledged shortcomings of the schools, there were always schools and teachers, programs and strategies, which raised hopes for a revitalization of education in our cities. Massive federal intervention through the Elementary and Secondary Act and otherwise offered stimulation and support for equality of educational opportunity and greater attention to the needs

of those for whom traditional schooling was inadequate or inappropriate; but also contributed to the problems of city school administration.

At the present time, the signs of renewal and reinvigoration seem to be increasing; and some are bold enough to hope that our city schools may be heading toward a new era of excellence. The thrust of this paper, and of the Urban Education Studies which this author is directing, is (1) to delineate more clearly the positive factors at work; (2) to identify remaining obstacles to educational effectiveness, (3) to discover strategies which hold promise for systemwide renewal; and (4) to join others in discovering directions and means towards the creation of educational systems which will contribute powerfully to development of the full talents of all children and youth.

SEARCHING OUT THE BEST IN URBAN EDUCATION

Lloyd M. Cooke

A high proportion of youth drop out of high school in urban America. Many others finish high school with inadequate skills to compete for higher education opportunities. Large numbers of low income youth cannot meet minimum communication and computation requirements for entry-level jobs. The number of jobs is declining in most big cities. These facts join to produce an almost insurmountable barrier to the social and economic rebirth of New York, Detroit, Cleveland and other major cities. Thus the business community, through the Economic Development Council (EDC), considers the quality of student performance to be one of the most critical problems in New York City today. The problem is gigantic and pervasive. It is too pervasive for one institution to have to bear the responsibility alone. All elements of society should work together to reach a solution.

To repeat: The problem is gigantic and pervasive. The focus is deliberately on just one manifestation of the problem. The subject might just as well have been introduced from the standpoint of such highly visible issues as school violence and vandalism, collective bargaining struggles, conflicts over desegregation, and notably, decreased willingness of the public to pay the increasing costs of public schools. The discussion will be restricted to the burgeoning problem of underachievement or inadequate achievement of poor and

minority children in most urban public schools. This is because solution to this problem may go well beyond desegregation, more money, innovative programs or increased security.

The basic problem needs better definition. One can make a good case that many of the problems under discussion and under debate here are not primary problems of themselves, but are symptoms of a basic problem. The basic problem may well be -- How do we provide quality education for children of the poor? This is not a new problem. Nor is it a problem which has ever been solved. Throughout the history of schooling, both here and abroad, the education process has been one of screening in those who can make it and screening out those who cannot make it in the established system. All sorts of reasons have been offered for the maintenance of such a process. The most damning for the future of the poor are the theories of Jensen and Coleman that children of certain ethnic groups are inherently less intelligent.

Also, a variety of explanations have been proposed for the problems encountered by poor and minority children. These include differences in culture, physiological and psychological damage resulting from poverty living conditions, insufficient encouragement and outright prejudice. Attempts to correct these important environmental factors through desegregation laws and practices, through community-based school boards, and through compensatory education have been of limited success at best. Such efforts must continue vigorously -- for political and sociological reasons and for educational equality, for certain, and possibly for education quality.

But while such efforts are continued, we must also clearly define the most promising approaches upon which to focus our attention.

In a major effort to define critical action areas and to describe work that has succeeded in these areas the EDC, the New York Board of Education and the UFT have collaborated to design and launch PROPED. PROPED's primary purpose is to identify, describe and facilitate the replication of those exemplary programs which advance the progress of slow learners and underachievers. Slow learning has been chosen as a key factor because it appears to correlate well with so many of the problems manifested among poor and minority children. This emphasis grew out of results from Mastery Learning which suggest that slow learners can learn the full content of courses under proper conditions. In fact, Prof. Benjamin Bloom now interprets recent Mastery Learning data to say that Mastery Learning approaches can enable slow learners to learn faster. PROPED is designed to critically analyze those programs which are succeeding with otherwise poor performance students. There are enough classes, schools and whole systems which have had remarkable success in dealing with the problems of urban education to convince EDC that therein may lie a fruitful route to resolve the problem. EDC has therefore committed itself to the task of ferretting out these successful examples and characterizing them in such ways as to help others achieve similar success. The goal is simply to facilitate the spread of those programs and classroom approaches which work the best for for slow learners.

HISTORIC AND CURRENT ROLES OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THOSE ROLES

Faustine C. Jones

This paper will look at the topic from two dimensions -- (1) historic and current roles of public education in general, i.e. in terms of policies and programs for the majority group and public attitudes toward those roles, and (2) historic and current roles of public education for blacks and other minorities of color, i.e. in terms of policies and programs planned for minorities and public attitudes toward those roles. For both the majority group and minorities, a survey of the historical and educational literature reveals conflicting conceptions of education and crosscurrents in educational thought. Disagreements and divisiveness in education often stem from, and reflect, more basic economic, social and political differences in the society.

For the majority group in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, key issues were: universal education vs. education for the elite, tax support vs. private support, state control vs. local or church control, and in the curriculum -- election vs. prescription.[1] These issues continued until about World War I for the majority group, with emphasis on extending and perfecting the notion of universal educational opportunity, including higher education[2]. From World War I to the present key issues are: (1) questions of equal educational opportunity for all, (2) control and support of education, (3) the content of the educational program in public schools, (4) the social role of teachers and the teaching profession.[3]

For Blacks and other minorities, educational ideals have not been applied as with the dominant group. In fact, the general educational policy was one of exclusion for blacks in the south until the end of the Civil War. In the north, most states followed practices of separatism in public schools, even though they were not required by law to do so. From 1896-1954 educational policy and practice followed the "separate but equal" edict of the Supreme Court, implementing the separateness but not the equality provision. Since 1954 there have been continuing struggles to equalize educational opportunity, especially via desegregation and affirmative action policies and programs.

But what of public attitudes as educational issues develop and educational ideals clash? The "public" is not a monolithic group; it is composed of competing interest groups as well as major, identifiable class, ethnic and racial divisions. In general, business interests have supported policies geared to the attainment of basic literacy and vocational skills. State and local governments have opted for a reasonably enlightened electorate. The federal government has been interested in supporting citizenship and loyalty to the national state. Most parents have perceived education to be the primary means by which their offspring would qualify for the kind of employment which would provide them a comfortable living and some degree of economic security. Controversy arises between individuals and groups as public schools emphasize one goal over another, and fail to address particular concerns of some group. Additionally, as public schools have been used to take over functions normally assumed by other societal institutions as the family, the primary function of schools to attain cognitive ends for all the children of all the

people seems to have suffered. Parents particularly are critical today of the perceived shortcomings of education for their young.

Reanalysis of primary and secondary roles of public schooling is absolutely necessary today if Blacks and other minorities, including the poor, are to receive maximum benefits from urban education in the 1980's. Further, reanalysis of the relationship between education and other societal institutions is fundamantal to the same end.

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1. R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, A History of Education in American Culture. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1953, p. 189.
2. Ibid., p. 356
3. Ibid., p. 516

SOCIAL COSTS AND BENEFITS OF EDUCATION

Bernard C. Watson

Determining social costs and benefits of education is a difficult task. Most of the literature fails to identify explicit linkages between education and its social costs and benefits. The problem of identifying and disaggregating social costs and benefits is complicated by the fact that this is not a standard field of inquiry as are: economic costs, achievement, testing and curriculum to name a few. Another characteristic in this regard is that social costs and benefits are products of a network of forces which are beyond the direct control of educational systems. Furthermore, our government, despite repeated requests that such social indicators be established, has failed to establish clear and understandable social indicators whereby such costs and benefits can be measured.

Yet, we know some things. Well-educated persons tend to produce well-educated children and well-educated persons also tend to be in the higher paying, higher status jobs. We know that there is a direct association between educational attainment and the instances of certain categories of crime and incarceration. We know that there is a relationship between education, income and employment status.

Even a perfunctory examination of our society and the world society should demonstrate to all of us the social benefits to be derived from education. The U.S. is, today, the most technologically advanced nation on earth. It has the highest standard of living, has the best fed, best educated and

best housed citizenry of any of the major nations. Our citizens live longer and are healthier. Surely the brains, skills, creativity and performance of those who created this state of affairs can be attributed in large measure to the magnitude and quality of education afforded to most of its citizens. Who can measure, for example, the social benefits which accrue from the discovery of a polio vaccine or the many other medical innovations and scientific breakthroughs which have characterized our civilization? How does one measure the benefits of a legal system which, finally, begins to provide some modicum of representation for those who cannot afford and/or do not understand the value and necessity for protection of their rights as citizens? Does anyone seriously question the contribution education made to the maintenance of that fragile comity which has held this polity together through the civil rights revolution, the Vietnam nightmare and Watergate? Surely education made significant contributions, not only to socialization of waves of immigrants from many lands, but also contributed to maintaining some measure of wholeness to a nation of minorities. The U.S. is made up of minorities; there is no majority. Even the much-maligned WASPS make up only 27% of our population.

But there are also social costs. The denial of education to blacks in the history of this country led in part to high unemployment, low levels of achievement, resentment, hostility and finally, racial confrontation and riots. There are other costs; for every dollar invested in education, other areas of society are denied that investment: disposable income, health care, parks, recreation facilities, housing and defense. On the other hand, there are social costs connected in failing to invest in education.

As our urban schools become more and more the repositories of minorities and the poor and as they continue to perform so poorly for significant percentages of their students, we will incur the costs associated with the human capital spawned by such schools: functional illiterates, without skills, without understanding of even the most basic principles of economics, politics and social intercourse and, perhaps more frightening, angry and frustrated. The relationship between years of schooling and other indices of well-being are too well known to recount here in any detail: health, political participation, income, status, crime and taxes paid, to name but a few.

What is more frightening to me, however, is what appears to be a developing "underclass" in America. This underclass cuts across racial lines and is characterized by people who are out of school, unemployed, without skills and without hope. They are concentrated in our cities and their numbers are growing. They are, for the most part, young. We ignore their plight at our own peril. This is human capital and whether it becomes productive and healthy is a determination we can make. There are costs and there are benefits, but as Cliff Wharton said in a recent speech, "The most important capital in any society is not its factories, its houses, its cars, its tools, or even its oil wells. It is the brain power of its people."

QUALITY AND EQUALITY: THE REGULATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Arthur E. Wise

Restoring confidence in public education requires first an accurate diagnosis of the cause of the loss of confidence in public education. Are the public schools now worse than they used to be? (Short answer: no.) Do they serve some children well? (Short answer: yes.) Do they serve some children badly? (Short answer: yes.) If the public schools are not generally worse than they used to be, what has caused the loss in confidence? We shall argue that the loss in confidence is a rationalization for not spending more on the education of those students whom the schools have not been serving well.

The quest for equality of educational opportunity has been underway for several decades. The courts, the federal government and the states have pursued policies intended to provide the equality of educational opportunity which local schools would not or could not provide. Progress has been slow but there has been progress.

Increasingly the courts, the federal government and the states have been drawn to the idea that they should try to improve educational quality as well. Some of these policies have been well motivated, but have had the effect of retarding desegregation and school finance reform. Some of these policies have resulted in unnecessary and undesirable centralization and bureaucratization. Some of these policies tend to shift the blame for the failure of education from the school to the student.

My suggestions for the agenda for the 1980's will be strategic. I shall suggest how to pursue the goals of equal educational opportunity

and quality education through appropriate assignments for local, state and federal agencies.

The definitions below are crucial to an understanding of the presentation:

GENERAL DEFINITIONS

Educational opportunity refers to the allocation of human and material resources to students or the assignment of students to resources or programs.

Educational quality refers to the effectiveness of the resources employed in the education of students.

Regulation here refers to pronouncements contained in federal, state and judicial policies intended to promote equality or quality in education.

Rational policies are those policies whose regulations can achieve their intended effects.

Hyperrational policies are those policies whose regulations cannot achieve their intended effects.

Centralization refers to federal, state and judicial policies which preempt or circumscribe local decisionmaking.

Bureaucratization refers to schools assuming more of the characteristics of bureaucracy.

DEFINITIONS OF SPECIFIC POLICIES

Desegregation refers to policies concerned with the allocation of educational resources to students or to the assignment of students to such resources in a racially non-discriminatory manner.

School finance reform refers to state-level policies intended to achieve an equitable distribution of resources.

Minimal competency testing refers to state-level test requirements for graduation and promotion in the public schools.

Title I, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is a federal law which allocates federal funds for the education of children from low-income families.

Education for All Handicapped Children is a federal law requiring that all handicapped children be effectively educated.